

man's radical unprotectedness, loneliness, and exposedness," to whose defense, after all, that orientation seems to have devoted itself. How? Insofar as it provides an ultimate footing, gives a final meaning. Only man can die. Death as his "ownmost ability-to-be" is his indestructible distinction. In his resolute orientation towards death, man becomes aware of his uniqueness. In the anticipation of death his fortitude is tested, his life attains its seriousness, the weight of the "thou shalt" that wrests his life from comfort, taking things lightly, and shirking. The authority of death brings *Dasein* "into the simplicity of its fate." It thrusts *Dasein* into its "guilt," the guilt of man with respect to Being, which is not without him. Death claims man wholly; it commands him, fills him with angst, and elevates him; it makes him receptive to the call like a God.<sup>9</sup>

Strauss's critique of the character of belief proper to Heidegger's position does not concern a mere attunement (*Gestimmtheit*) – although this attunement by no means remains extrinsic to the character of belief. And it exceeds the critique of the belief rooted in groundlessness that is proper to a philosophy incapable of rationally demonstrating its right and necessity – though it is no coincidence that with that belief, a devoutness of another kind enters into philosophy that gives rise to new irrational expectations.<sup>10</sup> The reading of Meyer's *Die Versuchung des Pescara* to which footnote 23 invites us confirms and sheds light on the specific point that Strauss has his eye on in his confrontation with Heidegger's interpretation of the call. The hero of the novella that is set in Renaissance Italy during Charles V's reign, the emperor's supreme commander Pescara, voices what Strauss himself calls by name in none of his publications and nowhere makes the express object of critique. Pescara, who is held to be "godless," confesses: "I believe in a divinity, and truly not any imaginary one." His divinity is death: "A dark but wise divinity." The supreme commander, "who avoided setting foot on Christian ground," becomes so dominated and fulfilled by his god, once he has heard the call, that his face ultimately shows and says nothing but "piety and obedience." The piety and obedience to his god make Pescara inaccessible to the temptation to change sides, to cease being the emperor's supreme commander and the head of his Spanish

9 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Halle a. d. S.: Niemeyer, 1927), § 49, pp. 247–48; § 50, pp. 250–51; § 51, pp. 252, 254; § 53, pp. 263, 264; § 57, pp. 275, 276; § 62, pp. 308, 310; § 63, p. 313; § 74, pp. 384, 386; § 75, p. 391.

10 Cf. "Why Political Philosophy?" 102 and 105.

troops and to join a league for the liberation of Italy from Spanish domination. Neither the emissary from the league, which the Duke of Milan forged with Venice, the Vatican, and France, nor Pescara's wife, the poet Victoria Colonna who is enthusiastic about Italy, are able to win the supreme commander over for their political objective, for the fight against tyranny, and for the independence of the Italian states (among which the kingdom of Naples was to be awarded to Pescara), an undertaking that would presuppose Pescara's betrayal of his worldly lord. "Italy talks in vain, it wastes its energy," Pescara replies to Victoria's patriotic appeal. "I have long known the temptation, I saw it coming and peak like an oncoming wave, and did not waver, not for a moment, not with the slightest thought. For I was not confronted with any choice, I did not belong to myself, I stood outside of things." And he adds the reason why he does not allow political considerations to touch him, what keeps him from at all pondering a decision that bears on his own good, why he keeps to the path he had once set out on, the moral stance that he has adopted, with unconditional resoluteness: "My divinity has quieted the storm all around my oars."<sup>11</sup>

Meyer is mentioned by Strauss once more. The name occurs again in a letter to Seth Benardete from January 1965, specifically in the context of a brief discussion of the question *ti esti theos*: "If one starts from the experience, one finds the Presence or the Call – the Wholly Other which is both terrible and gracious-graceful – one might say that wholly other is death (cf. C. F. Meyer, *Die Versuchung des Pescara*) or nothingness – but *experienced* not as such but as a being, preferably as a human being or rather as ἀνθρωποειδής. 'Timor fecit deos': fear belongs to the irascible – θυμός (≠ ἐπιθυμία) necessarily 'personifies.' Yet one must add immediately: Amor (ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ) fecit deos – a love which is not satisfied (rightly) with any actual καλόν because of its essential caducity."<sup>12</sup> In light of the double answer that Strauss outlines in a few strokes, one can say that the repeated reference to Heidegger/Meyer aims at an elementary experience to which each of the authors gives apt expression in his own way. The longing for security and justice on the one hand, for the beautiful on the other, makes the gods. In his genealogical reconstruction from 1947, Strauss had taken into account

11 Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Die Versuchung des Pescara. Novelle* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1887), 110, 122, 127, 163, 167, 169, 176, 182, 184 (towards the end of the third chapter, fourth chapter, and first half of fifth chapter).

12 Letter to Seth Benardete from January 22, 1965, in my possession.